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Inaugural Essay

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on
Typhus Fever

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In the

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By

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of Pennsylvania

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Typhus Fever.

So far as my personal observations extend, respecting the existence of this formidable disease, in this section of our happy country, I feel justified in the conclusion, that of late it has been much more prevalent than formerly, owing most probably in a very great measure, to some peculiarity in the mode of living, which predisposes the system to its attack. Not less from this fact, than from the circumstance of its too frequently baffling the wisdom and united efforts of practitioners, by the obscurity of its nature and diversity of forms which it not unfrequently presents, I was induced to take this species of fever as a proper subject to engage my attention in the accomplishment of an inaugural dissertation.

²Typhus fever is found recorded by all nosological writers as a genus of continued fever, which

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according to different authors has received different divisions: thus, by Cullen continued fever is divided into three genera; by Sauvages into four; by Linnaeus into four; by Sagar into five; and by Vogel into twenty four. These divisions, reaching beyond the necessity of such minuteness, must, in a practical point of view, rather serve to perplex than benefit the memory; therefore a division of continued fever into synocha or inflammatory and nervous or typhus merits a decided preference not only on account of its simplicity, but from the circumstance of its receiving the sanction of medical gentlemen, whose scientific attainments and tenets are altogether unimpeachable. When I assert that the latter division is most correct, I hold that my position is further corroborated by the opinion of Cullen in its favour, notwithstanding he has arranged continued fever into synocha, typhus, and synochus; for when speaking

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of the last, he says, (to use his own words) "I think
that the limits between the synochus and ty-
phus will be with difficulty assigna; and
I am disposed to believe that synochus arises
from the same causes as typhus, and is therefore
only a variety of it." Trusting in the correctness
of the opinion of Cullen on this point, it
may be farther urged, that if a few symptoms
of typhus and inflammatory fever occasionally
presenting themselves simultaneously to the
notice of the physician, should demand a
distinct title, we would, upon the same prin-
ciple be justified in introducing a new name
to a combination of any two or more symp-
toms from any two distinct diseases. From what
I have stated, I maintain that there is no such
fever as synochus, and to reject it as a species of
continua is in perfect accordance with my
humble opinion.

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Typhus is derived from the greek word, τυφος, signifying Sleep or Stupor, which generally supervenes, sooner or later, in most continued ~~exacerbated~~ fevers, and which is universally allowed to be a very prominent symptom, in the disease to which this name has been applied. It is also derived ^{from} typhon, a word made use of among the Egyptians to signify an evil spirit. This term, "Typhus" is to a certain extent objectionable, and to discard it, would not be altogether improper, when we take into consideration, the erroneous ideas, that are so generally entertained at the present day by the vulgar as to the real nature of the disease, thus offering an almost insurmountable barrier to the efforts of the physician in endeavouring to arrest its ravages. When called to a patient labouring under this affection, and his ear is pronounced a case of Typhus, what is the impression he immediately imbibes? That his complaint



is one of debility, that all stimulating measures
will only aggravate his condition; and that
stimulants and tonics will alone restore his
health. If then we commence our treatment
with evacuating remedies, the patient's mind
will operate against the medicinal agency of our
medicines, and thereby render our endeavours
fruitless; hence the propriety of another course
in lieu of hygienic by which this fever may
be designated, and no one would now more
appropriate than, congestive:

Dysentery, by nosologists, has been divided into mi-
litate and gravele, the former is generally distin-
guished from the latter by the more gradual
progress of its attack and the greater rarity of its
symptoms; also by the absence of those symptoms
which are said to indicate a putrescence of the
fluids. As the one is only an aggravated condition
of the other, I am at a loss to determine the



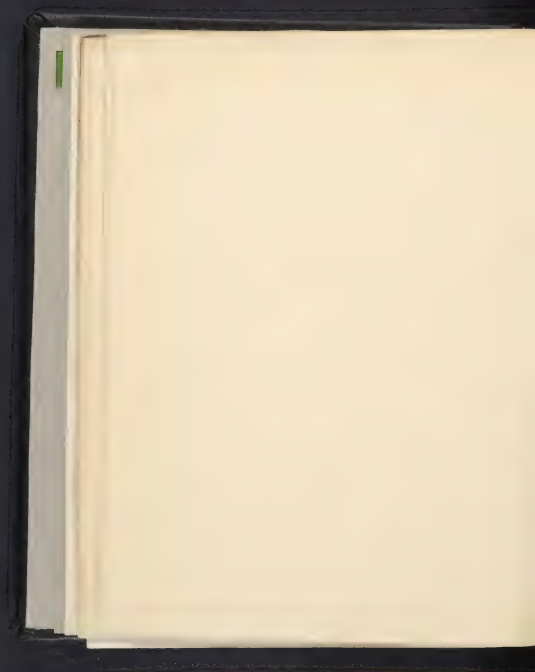
propriety of retaining the distinction. In
intermittent and remittent fevers we do not
always meet with the same degree of violence
in the symptoms, and hence on the same prin-
ciple that we divide typhus into irritative and gra-
vise, we may divide the fevers in question.

In the consideration of the different stages of this
disease I am induced to believe, that they can be re-
solved into three, "the irritative, congestive, and
inflammatory," but the space of time interven-
ing between these different stages may be of so short
duration as not to be perceptible; and thus a pre-
mature conclusion may give rise to the idea of
their non existence. It may be added in further
confirmation of my position, that in every case
of typhus fever, no matter what might have been
the agent in its production, there is always more
or less irritation modified by circumstances, which
irritation if kept up for a due length of time



becomes the cause of fluxion, and hence the sub-
sequent congestion, which under similar circum-
stances is invariably productive of inflammation.
Thus we see that congestion cannot exist without
previous irritation, nor inflammation without
previous congestion; but that irritation can exist
without congestion and congestion without
inflammation. Hence these facts are an evi-
dence of the propriety of the division into the
three above mentioned stages.

Livor is more liable to be affected in those of warm
temperatures; those whose avocations require a sedentary
life, and whose system is more relaxed; those much
exposed to cold; and those who indulge in intem-
perance in the use of stimulating liquors. It is ascribable
to colder than other constitutions just as it is progre-
ssive to the exercise and fatigue they undergo in
warfare. It is often generated in jails, hog sties,
prison ships, war houses, and in most of the



ill ventilated apartments of the poor.

typhus sometimes occurs in warm climates, being in the more temperate and cold, its prevalence is to a more or greater extent. In Great Britain, it is said that typhus is favoured by low temperatures, being most prevalent in the cold months of winter, generally after a preceding or abating of the heat of summer, and occurs more often prevailing in a considerable degree in cold wet autumns.

As to respects the causes we are assured that there are more than one, which occasionally produce this disease, and in the first place a small spot of contagion. This is supposed to consist in air that is confined within a given space, fully saturated with the effluvia arising from the body of a patient labouring under this disease. Whether this is capable of communication or of producing disease in persons exposed to its influence, similar to the one from which it had its origin, has called into



requiring the intellectual powers of the most
respectable physicians from the time of Hippo-
crates down to the present day. Notwithstanding
the controversies which have existed relative to this
point nothing decidedly satisfactory has been accom-
plished, both parties maintaining with some show
of their respective positions which truly are not
without some degree of probability. From my
limited knowledge of the contagion of typhoid
fever, an inability to draw any positive conclu-
sion respecting its ~~not~~ ^{from} ~~from~~ ^{from} yet I am rather in-
clined to the opinion, that under certain circum-
stances it does arise from, and is propagated by
contagion. This would seem, in a measure, verifi-
ed by the circumstance of its frequently run-
ning through a whole family, when any one
person at first is attacked; and also from the
numerous facts observed and related by Dr. Hay-
garth, which were subsequently confirmed by



The observations of Bancroft. (By the former it ^{is} given
down that not more than one person out of three
by three is naturally exempted from typhoid; from the
one hundred and eighty eight men, examined children
were fully exposed to the contagion of typhoid, in cages
and nights together in small, close, and dirty rooms
all of them except eight were infected with this fever.
Canceling the probability of its occasional origin
from contagion I am nevertheless led to the be-
lief from several personal observations that it fre-
quently arises from other causes independent
of the one last mentioned. Of these the first to
claim our notice is miasma, or a peculiar state of
the atmosphere, arising from marshes or low
damp places, or from some external agent.
Of the precise nature of miasma we signify de-
mands the confession of our ignorance. For
more than once it has baffled the attempts of
chemists in endeavoring to effect its analysis.



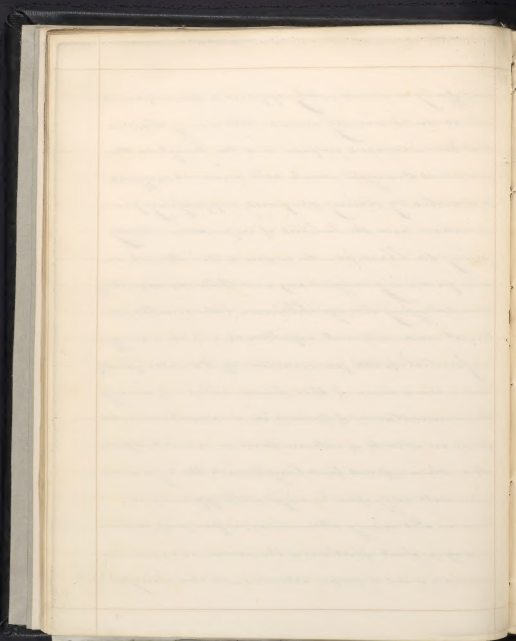
is: the opinion of some, that as nothing
natural exists, without an active causing prin-
ciple, which if natural is but *propter*; as
the cause of marmata, as of all other diseases,
must be, what may be marmatized, is con-
distinction from natural, spiritual, or beyond
the reach of our senses and reason, therefore not
to be discovered without the aid of revelation.

"*causa latet, vis est manifestata.*" What this un-
known principle is after production of the disease
in question, I do not entertain the slightest
doubt, of the undoubted presence of these two causes,
nothing satisfactory has been known.

Besides the causes above mentioned there are others
which are supposed to be instrumental in its
production, namely those the first that merit
its attention is the application of cold. These
ordinary circumstances then not production
of any ill consequences, but when sudden,



irregularly or inordinately applied to the surface, the
reverse most usually occurs. As it is very obvious
that the cutaneous surface and the lungs are the
mediums through which cold produces its effects,
it operates by closing the pores, suppressing per-
spiration and the holitus of respiration, thereby
forcing the blood from the surface to the internal or-
gans, producing congestion, and their concomitants,
thus destroying the equilibrium between the ex-
ternal and internal capillaries, which is always
so essential to the preservation of the order of health.
That is also a cause of this disease, which is proved by
the circumstance of persons in a convalescent state
from an attack of intermittent or remittent fever
who when exposed for a long time to the rays of the
sun will very often be seized with typhus fever.
There are also many other causes: as fear, grief, despair,
or any violent affection of the mind; also a penur-
ous diet, want of proper attention to cleanliness, &c.



But above all, the most prolific source is the ill management of intermittent, remittent or bilious continued fever, by resorting prematurely to the administration of tonics and Stimuli, under the erroneous impression that of debility, or a tendency to it in those diseases, especially

Zyphus always makes its attack on the system in a very insidious manner. Generally the patient feels no slight indisposition in the commencement, that he is induced to continue in the prosecution of his avocation, for a greater or less space of time under the idea of its spontaneous subsidence. At first there is no chill, fever, nor pain, there being only a loss of appetite, languor, and some defection of spirits; which, if not arrested, are soon or later followed, by tenderness and soreness of the muscles, with acute pain in the head, back and extremities, accompanied with alternate chills and flushes of heat. These are soon followed by a hot dry skin;

